union
RAILWAYS

The Thames to the Medway

The new Union Railway described

The Thames to the Medway

The Union Railway runs in a tunnel under the Thames from West Thurrock Marshes in Essex to the Broadness Peninsula, and along the Ebbsfleet Valley to Pepper Hill, Gravesend. From Pepper Hill to the Medway, it follows the A2/M2 on the south side. The route could enhance the significant development opportunities which exist in the Dartford and Gravesham areas.

A line to link London Waterloo International station to the high-speed railway could run between Longfield and the A2, mainly taking over the disused Gravesend West to Longfield railway.

Network SouthEast services to and from the Medway Towns could join the new railway using a junction at Ebbsfleet. Options for stations on the Union Railway include an international and domestic station at Ebbsfleet, with interchange to the North Kent line.

Open for detailed route information

THE UNION RAILWAY

This booklet provides information about the route which the Government has announced for the Union Railway, the high-speed railway between London and the Channel Tunnel.

The Union Railway is designed to provide:

- **The main railway between Britain and continental Europe.**
- **A major increase in capacity and improvement in the quality of journeys between Kent, Essex and London.**
- **The transport spine for the development of the East Thames Corridor.**

The route has been chosen by the Government from options developed by Union Railways Limited, the agency company set up by British Rail in 1992. The engineering, environmental and financial plans for the Union Railway have been produced in association with more than 40 leading private-sector consultancies.

The detailed proposals for the railway will be refined and developed only after consultation with those affected. You can find out more by visiting our Information Centres - dates and times of their visits to your area will be announced in the local press.

This booklet also gives brief details of Union Railways policy on a range of issues - you can find more information in other Union Railways leaflets.

WHY IS THE UNION RAILWAY NEEDED?

The Union Railway will provide the essential capacity to meet fast-rising demand for international rail travel, following the opening of the Channel Tunnel. Around the turn of the century, the existing railways in Kent and South-East London will be unable to cope with the predicted growth in demand for travel.

The Union Railway will also offer major improvements in the quality of journeys between Kent, Essex and London - much faster journeys, greater reliability, and a wider range of destinations.

The Union Railway will carry both the growing international traffic, and more than 25,000 commuters each day, in much less space than a motorway, with much less damage to the environment.

As international trains and Network SouthEast express trains will use the Union Railway, existing railways will have more room, not only for improvements to passenger services, but also for international freight traffic attracted by the Channel Tunnel. This freight would otherwise cause a major increase in lorry journeys, and up to 45 million kg of additional exhaust emissions every year. The Union Railway could also itself carry freight.

THE CHOICE OF ROUTE

The route chosen by the Government, and described in this booklet, is based on the easterly approach to London, which the Government adopted in 1991. That corridor has been studied to find a route which is capable of meeting environmental standards, and which can provide regeneration opportunities and improved rail services within the South-East. While principally conceived as a twin-track, high-speed passenger railway, the route is also capable of carrying freight trains.

The new route runs to the Channel Tunnel from a new station at Kings Cross/St Pancras in London. It can also carry international trains from London Waterloo via the existing London to Chatham line and a link line from Longfield to the Union Railway near Gravesend.

BENEFITS FOR THE SOUTH-EAST

More than half of the peak-period trains on the new railway will be for travellers within South-East England. With new Network SouthEast express trains, the Union Railway can transform rail travel between Kent, Essex and London. It will carry many more people, with much shorter journey times, more reliably and in much greater comfort, to new destinations.

The Union Railway presents opportunities to support the South-East's economy, by improving transport links for development in the East Thames Corridor and for other regeneration projects along its route.

LIMITING DISTURBANCE

The Union Railway route is the result of a comprehensive sifting process, which rejected any option which did not meet the environmental standards normally applied to major infrastructure projects. Scope to further limit effects on people, property and the environment will be discussed during the consultation process - the results of this will be carefully taken into account.

It is intended that the construction of the Union Railway will be carried out under a strictly enforced Code of Practice, to be drawn up in consultation with Local Authorities. Construction traffic would use railway land whenever possible, to limit disturbance.

PROPERTY EFFECTS

By next winter, the detailed route of the new railway is expected to be reserved, or "safeguarded", against other development. It is expected that details of property purchase arrangements will be announced at that stage.

DISCUSS YOUR CONCERNS

Union Railways wants householders, property owners, and all others affected by its proposals to have an opportunity to discuss them in detail with designers, planners and environmental specialists. This will be possible at the Information Centres which will be visiting about 40 locations along the route. The location and opening hours of the Centres will be announced in the local press.

Consultation is also being carried out with Local Authorities and other interested bodies. The Information Centres will return in the autumn to provide details of the outcome of the consultation process.

The Information Centres are intended to provide the best opportunity for direct contact with Union Railways. But if you are unable to visit one of the Centres, or if you would like more information, then please write to the address overleaf, or phone 081 760 5002 and speak to one of the liaison team.

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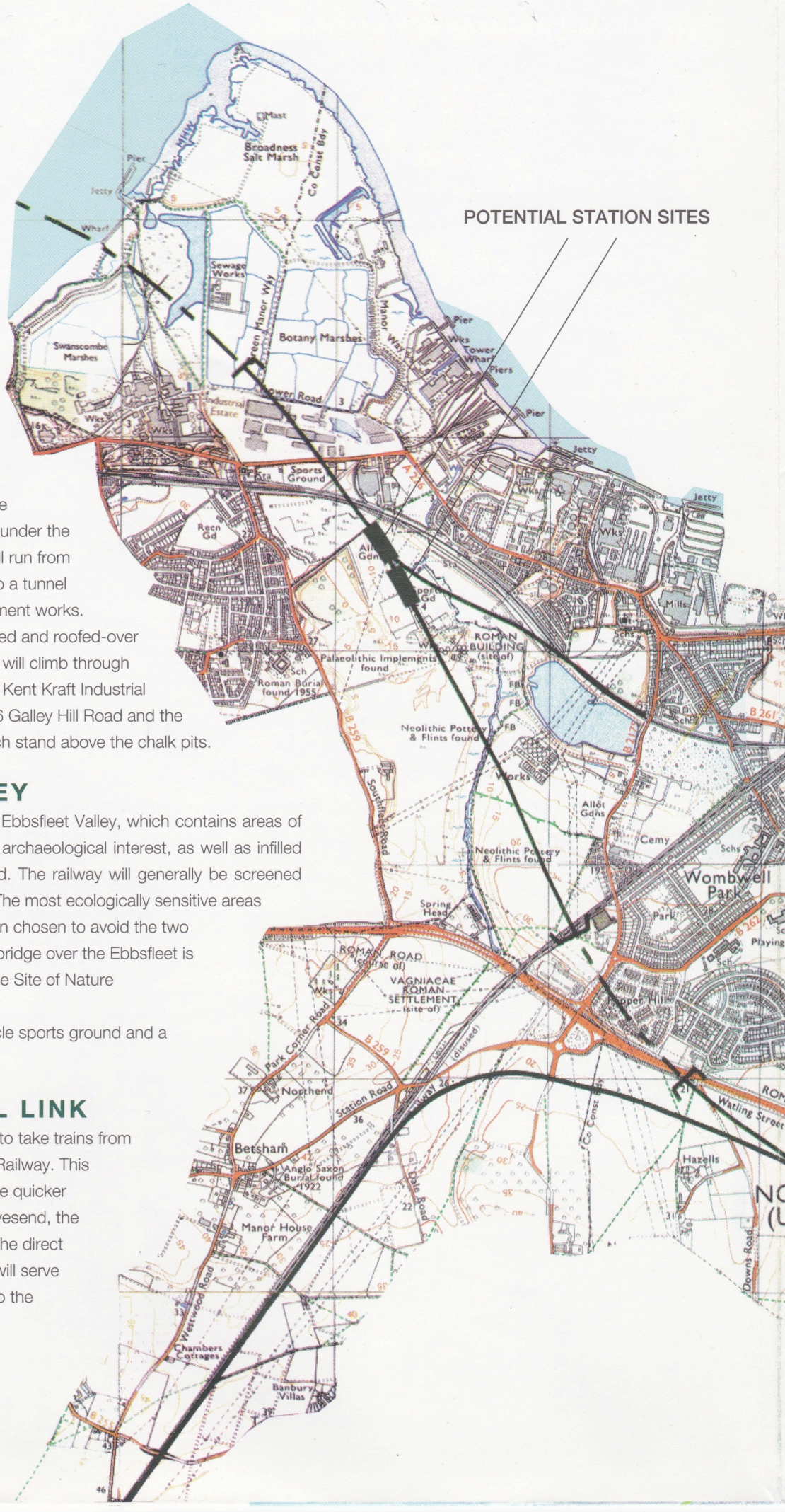


THAMES TUNNEL

The Union Railway will emerge in the Broadness Peninsula from a tunnel under the River Thames. The 3.2km tunnel will run from West Thurrock Marshes in Essex, to a tunnel entrance north of Swanscombe cement works.

After a short section of excavated and roofed-over ("cut and cover") tunnel, the railway will climb through worked-out chalk pits, crossing the Kent Kraft Industrial Estate, and passing under the A226 Galley Hill Road and the Dartford to Gravesend railway, which stand above the chalk pits.

EBBSFLEET VALLEY

The Union Railway will run into the Ebbsfleet Valley, which contains areas of nature conservation and important archaeological interest, as well as infilled chalk quarries and a sports ground. The railway will generally be screened from residential areas to the west. The most ecologically sensitive areas are avoided by the route: it has been chosen to avoid the two Scheduled Ancient Monuments. A bridge over the Ebbsfleet is sited for minimum disturbance to the Site of Nature Conservation Interest.

The route crosses the Blue Circle sports ground and a number of refuse tips.

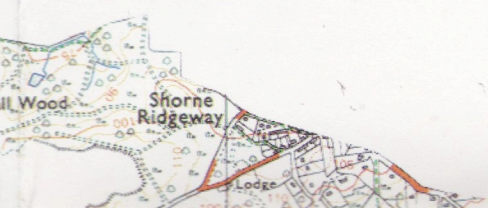
NORTH KENT RAIL LINK

A junction will be built at Ebbsfleet, to take trains from the North Kent line onto the Union Railway. This new North Kent Junction will provide quicker journeys between London and Gravesend, the Medway Towns, and further east. The direct Network SouthEast express trains will serve a station at Kings Cross, or run onto the proposed CrossRail line into central London.

Gravesham: Pepper Hill and the A2

The Thames to the Medway

Gravesham: A2 at Singlewell



INTERNATIONAL AND NETWORK SOUTHEAST STATIONS

A number of possible sites for stations on the Union Railway have been put forward for discussion - the choices will be made after public consultation. With good access to the M25 motorway, and to local towns, Ebbsfleet is the possible site of a station for International and Network SouthEast express trains running on the Union Railway. Drivers could "park and ride", to avoid road congestion by switching to high-speed rail services to London and the European mainland, and to other parts of the UK by changing trains in London. Interchange could be provided between a new station and the existing Northfleet station - travellers could then change between trains on the Union Railway and the Kent Link routes serving London Charing Cross and Cannon Street.

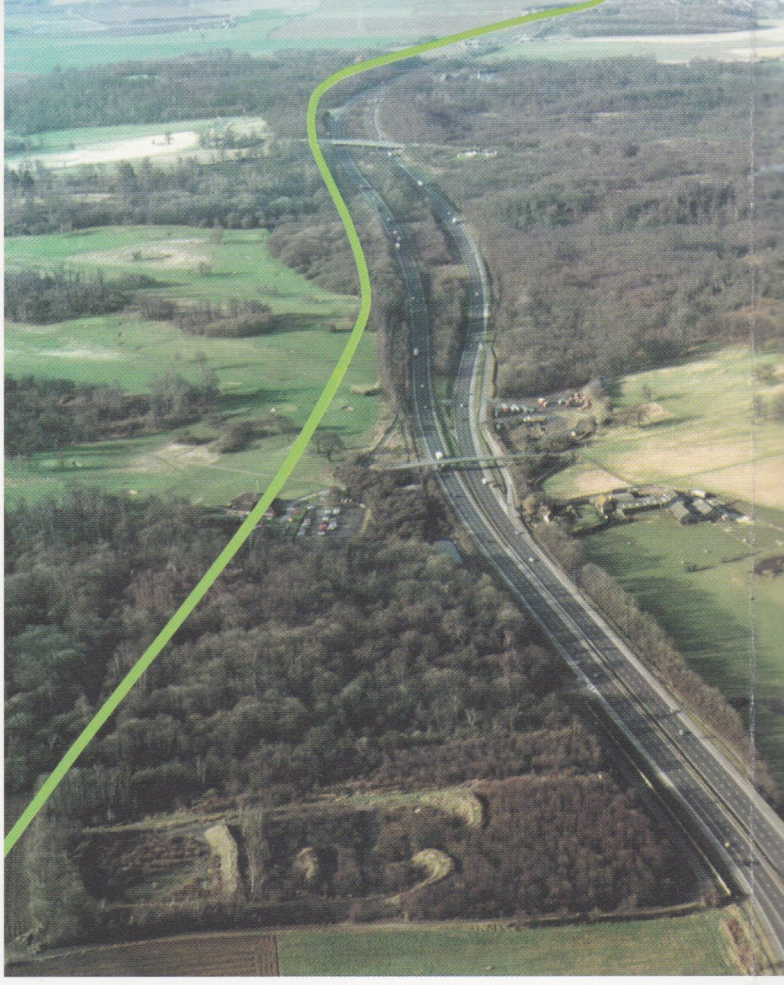
A station would boost development opportunities in Gravesend and Dartford, by providing improved access to the area. Road access and planning impacts will be discussed during public consultation.

PEPPER HILL

As the railway route runs south east out of the Ebbsfleet valley, it approaches Pepper Hill. Passing under the former Gravesend West railway, the route runs into an 800-metre-long tunnel under the Sainsbury's access road, Pepper Hill, and the A2.

The tunnel will continue under the A2, and the railway will emerge, screened in a deep cutting, on the south side of the A2 embankment.

An alternative route around Pepper Hill, crossing over the A2, is also feasible, and the benefits and disadvantages will be discussed during public consultation.



Gravesham: Cobham Park, A2 at Rochester and Cobham Golf Course

PEPPER HILL TO SINGLEWELL

The new railway will continue in cutting on the south side of the A2 embankment. It will occupy a strip of agricultural land, passing beneath Downs Road. The railway will cross over the A227 Wrotham Road, running close to the Tollgate Motel.

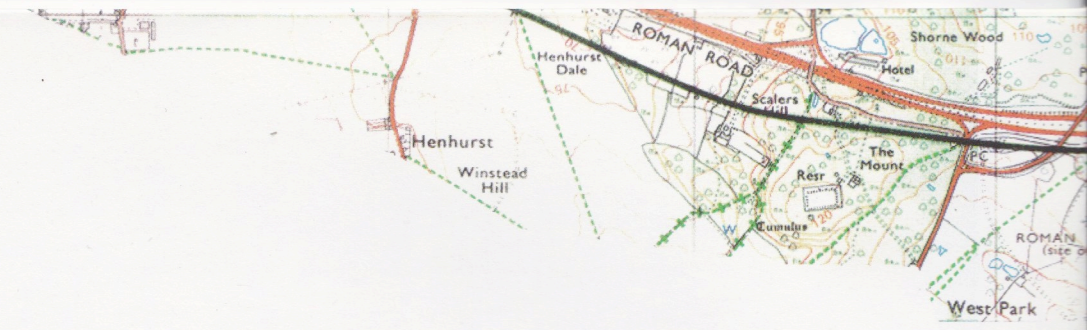
East of Wrotham Road, the railway will pass beneath Church Road and Henhurst Road, with bridges provided to maintain footpaths and rights of way. Road interchanges on the A2 will not be affected.

The location of freight facilities for the Union Railway will be the subject of public consultation. Between Wrotham Road and Henhurst Road, additional tracks might be provided, on which slower-moving freight trains could wait for passenger trains to pass.

LONDON WATERLOO CONNECTION

From a point south of the A2 close to Downs Road, a new junction and section of connecting line could be built to give international trains access to and from London Waterloo International station. The line would leave the main Union Railway using a flyover junction, and cross agricultural land south of the Pepper Hill A2 interchange, passing beneath New Barn Road.

Close to Dale Road, the line would join the route of the



Rochester: Strood and Cobham Park

disused Gravesend West branch, passing along the course of the old railway. At Longfield, where the presently disused railway cuttings form a Site of Nature Conservation Interest, the junction with the existing London to Chatham railway would be reinstated.

SINGLEWELL TO THE MEDWAY

South of Singlewell, the Union Railway route climbs towards Cobham Park on an embankment, parallel with the A2 road. The route then passes through Ashenbank Wood, which forms part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest, in a deep cutting. One property, The Nook, will be demolished, and the route affects a number of private accesses, for which alternatives will be discussed during public consultation.

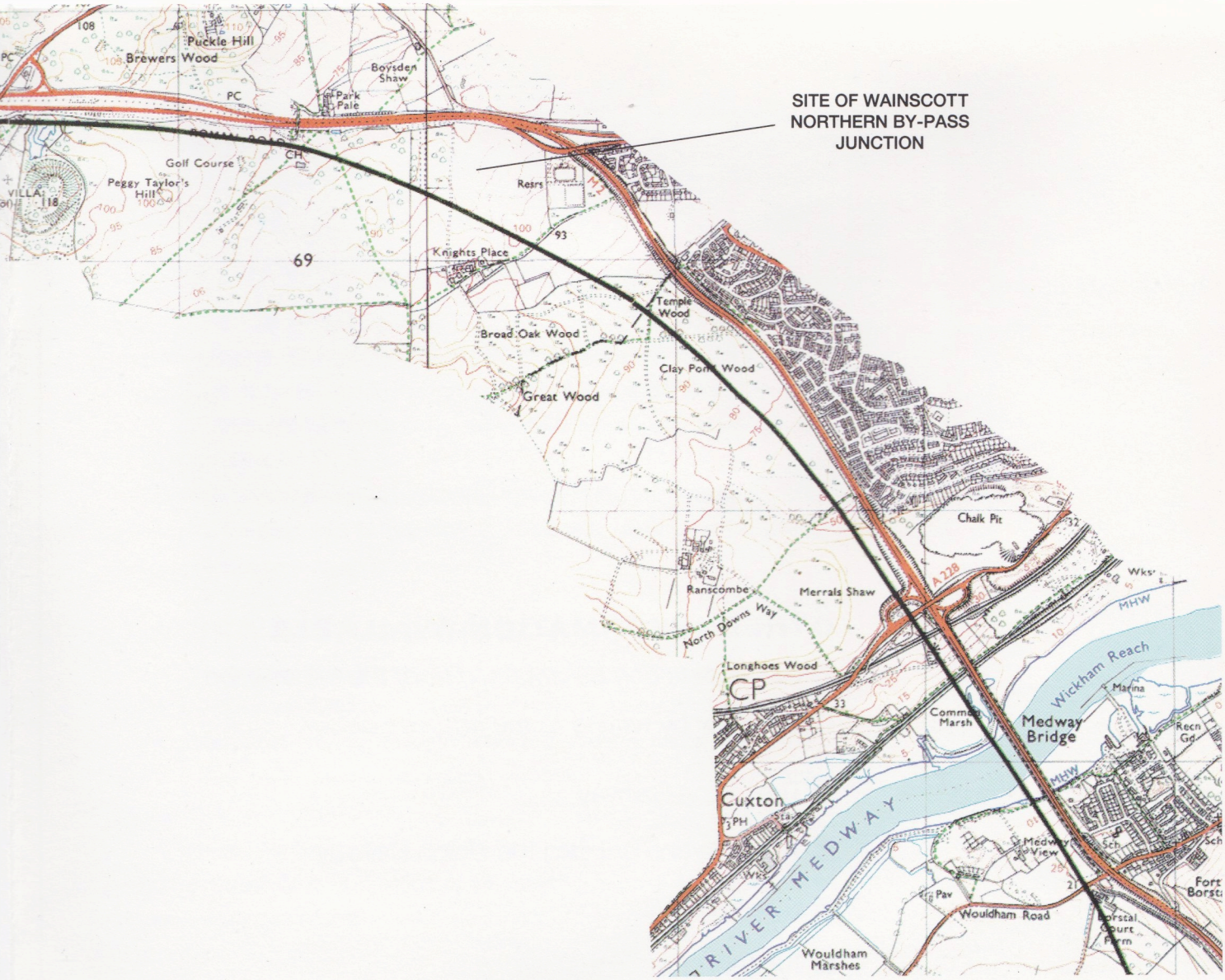
The Union Railway route crosses the northern edge of Cobham Registered Park, and through the northern boundary of Rochester & Cobham Park Golf Course.

The route curves to the east, passing through Cole Wood ancient woodland, close to Knights Place Farm. It skirts the proposed Wainscott Northern By-pass interchange with the M2, and avoids Colewood reservoirs.

The new railway will continue towards the Medway, close to the M2 motorway. It will cross Clay Ponds and Temple Woods, part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and the ancient woodland of Merrals Shaw. The railway will mainly be in deep cutting in this area.

Descending towards the Medway, the railway route runs beneath the A228 road and over both the London to Chatham and Strood to Maidstone railways. The existing junction between the M2 motorway and A228 Rochester Road will be reconstructed.

The Union Railway route crosses the River Medway about 60 to 100 metres south of the existing motorway bridge. The new viaduct will be on a similar scale, to keep to a minimum any additional obstruction of views along the valley from Rochester.



Rochester: Cuxton and M2 Medway Crossing

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OTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE

These leaflets can be obtained from the Information Centres, or by writing to the address below:

- The Union Railway
- The Environment and the Union Railway
- Noise and Vibration
- Tunnelling
- The Union Railway and the UK
- Business Benefits from the Union Railway
- Consultation and the Union Railway
- Commuters and the Union Railway

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